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ABSTRACT

The Gentle Approach is a method for lifting infants younger than 6 months that promotes security and reassurance during adult-imposed changes in position. Developed at the Emmi Pilker National Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries in Budapest, Hungary, the approach provides continual support and less opportunity for unprotected movements of the infant's head, neck, and upper body. The procedure involves: (1) approaching and greeting the infant; (2) placing the right hand on the infant's right upper arm, lifting the shoulder to make room for the educarer's left hand, slipping the educarer's left palm under the infant's shoulder and neck; (3) moving the educarer's right arm horizontally over the infant's stomach and placing the educarer's right hand under his or her left hand; (4) slipping the left arm progressively under the infant's trunk and left leg; and (5) lifting the infant slowly and in a horizontal position. The underlying principles of this technique are also applicable during feeding and diaper changing. (Includes 15 illustrative photographs.) (KDFB)

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ED 401 003

A Gentle Approach for Young Infants

by
Diana Suskind, Ed.D. and Márta Kozma

History. The Founding of Lóczy and Its Underlying Principles

When Dr. Pikler was commissioned by the city of Budapest to organize and direct the nursery-home on Lóczy Street in 1946, she had three goals:

1. To provide the kind of conditions in an institution that would allow infants and small children to develop physically and mentally in a healthy way. Although this would be much more difficult than in a family, she was convinced that it could be done, and that the key to the task was to be found in the principles and methods developed during her work with families.

2. To use her principles and practice under consistently applied, controlled circumstances, and thus put them to the test. The home offered the first possibility to do this. If the children who grew up in the home develop well, this would dispel doubt the children in those families where she had been the pediatrician had turned out well because the parents had not really, conscientiously followed her principles and practice - and the validity of her finding would be proven.

3. To pursue scientific study of the natural development of infants and small children, the nursery-home offered opportunity for thorough research without interfering in the daily lives of the children; systematic observation could be carried out on their development under exactly determined controllable conditions.

Lifting a Young Infant in a More Secure Way

Lifting a young infant in a way that promotes more security and reassurance during a change of position imposed by an adult has been observed during my visit at Emmi Pikler National Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries under the Loczy Model. While observing on the balcony of a modest yet elegant red brick building with a group of the youngest infants (3-6 months) and noticed Andrea (educarer)* gave me a smile as I was unaware of myself moving my arms trying to figure out what she was doing and why this new approach was incorporated when picking up young infants. My last visit was in 1991.

I asked Anna Tardos, psychologist, assistant director and she demonstrated with an infant doll and I tried with effort. In two days I was informed I would demonstrate. The next day I asked Dr. Gabriella Püspöky, director, for assistance.

This article is dedicated the generosity of the Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation Fellowship Grant providing financial assistance to study under the guidance of Anna Tardos and Gabriella Puspoky at the Emmi Pikler National Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries July 1996. The purpose of this training was to learn new caregiving skills that would help in my college teaching and share this knowledge in the United States and abroad. In Addition, the grant provided financial assistance to study at Lorenzo de Medici photography Cosimo Bargellini, instructor) and advance painting (Elise Schonhowd, instructor) in Florence, Italy. The photography for this publication has been made by Diana Suskind from the skills she learned in photography at Lorenzo de Medici 26th of May - 24th of June 1996.

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*Diana Suskind, Ed.D. is presently an Assistant Professor at Fitchburg State College, Fitchburg Massachusetts, USA in Early Childhood Education. She created Parent-N-Me Infant Guidance Class and is a RIE Fellow (Resources for Infant Educarers)
Márta Kozma is presently lead educarer at Emmi Pikler Institute, started employment in 1989. Márta is the educarer shown in the photographs.

She demonstrated with the infant doll. Then I got on the floor and Dr. Püspöky administrated the first steps to allow me to feel the security.

Throughout the day I pondered "Is this fine procedure significant enough to be documented for others to use? Dr. Püspöky, Anna Tardos and I agree. The Emmi Pikler Institute has allowed me to photograph this **gentle approach** and work together on this article for publication. Several days later Márta (educarer) demonstrated on the infant doll, actually assisting me from behind as I lifted the doll and told the steps in Hungarian. When Márta was with Alexandra (a female infant of 5 1/2 months old) I saw how it is in everyday life. These "step by step" procedures will be more easily understood and hopefully used.

Primary caregivers and nurses hopefully will consider to use this method with very young infants. A child is never treated as an object but always as a subject at the Emmi Pikler Institute.

Newer educarers at the Emmi Pikler Institute seem to prefer this gentle approach. Initially it may be more difficult to change if one has been working in the field for a long time because one is use to the traditional method. The rationale for using this procedure is simply the child is continually being supported and there are less opportunities of unprotected movements for the infants head, neck and upper body to sway.

If caregivers in the United States would see the significance in being an educarer and would use this secure procedure and others, the child would feel more secure by having more continuity. At Emmi Pikler Institute there are 4 primary educarers in the child's life. In the United States on the average the infant has many more caregivers attending to his/her needs. This may be because of staff change over, moving children from room to room, mobility of parents and substitutes. There are more caregivers during primary care this infant needs to accommodate.

It would be very respectful if caregivers would handle young infants during lifting in this respectful way. This would bring more security - continuity to the infant. It could start an awareness among caregivers to SLOW DOWN and FOCUS on each infant with a little more presence. What is about to happen is very important between the infant and adult. We recommend that this process be treated in that "SPECIAL CARING WAY".

Dr. Gabriella Püspöky demonstrated very slowly and repeatedly as we "step by step" documented the process. If you are left handed and find it necessary, implement this procedure in reverse.

STEP 1.

a. approach the infant

b. "say hello" have a contact, meet each other, prepare the infant of what you as the educarer are about to do and then wait a moment.

STEP 2.

a. place right hand on the infant's right upper arm.

b. lift the shoulder to make room for the educarer's left hand

c. Slip the educarer's left palm under the infant's shoulder and neck.

note the infant's neck and shoulder are resting on educarer's left palm

STEP 3.

a The adult's right arm becomes free and horizontally goes over the belly (stomach) of the infant and this "GENTLE APPROACH" continues.

b. Educarer places right his/her right hand under his/her left hand.

STEP 4.

a. with the left arm slip progressively under the trunk and left leg of the infant

Note: This is the same hand supporting the weight of the infant's leg. The infant's hand may be supported by resting on educarer's arm. Refrain from picking up an infant between his/her legs it is not respectful nor comfortable for the infant. Remember the infant's head is to be supported on the educarer's arm during feeding.

STEP 5.

a. Now lift the infant slowly.....horizontally.

Feeding Time between the Young Infant and Educarer.

Proceed to follow the previous step to hold the infant during feeding time. Notice in the photograph how Márta is **paying attention** to Alexandra as well as Alexandra is **paying attention** to Márta. When using a bottle in this case the educarer holds the bottle in her right hand.

Alexandra is in an upright position for burping referred to as "büfög" in Hungarian. One might ask "Why does the educarer not pat the infant's back? Look where the caregiver's hands are and how the infant is vertically positioned. In this position the infant's head is always supported. Did you know if child is allowed to be in an upright position the burp will come out naturally: Try it! This allows the infant time and that he/she can do it on his/her own. Therefore a foreign push from behind is not suddenly felt upon him.

In daycare centers and family child care homes in the United States there may not be adequate space to be separate from the other children. At a Resources for Infant Educarer approved center (founded by Ruth Money, a RIE fellow) there was a place for a small but comfortable adult size chair for the educarer with pillow on its arm in a playpen. Don't laugh. Remove the floor of the playpen. Other children can observe and even hold on to the bar but there is a separation and they will learn there is an order when they will be fed. The quality of observing and being together is very important. This will not interfere in the process between you and the child you are feeding.

When Lying the Young Infant on the Diapering Table

How about a little wider, America?

Please take a look at the diapering table and the position of Alexandra. The educarer and child can easily make eye contact and the child isn't seeing her educarer from a side view. They are really looking at each other as people, as individuals. Why do you think this can happen? The measurement of the width of changing table is significantly wider compared to the changing table used in the United States. We propose the companies who construct changing tables and

directors who order them will recommend changing tables to this wider position as well as have all the diapers and necessary clothing as seen in the photograph. This permits the educarer to never leave direct sight of the infant. The infant is seen moving more freely for they have more space to move.

Throughout the article the author refers to the young infant. Approximately in the second half of the first year the 5 steps are slightly modified.

In conclusion allow the child in your care to be handled in a skillfully yet simple manner. Securely position your infant in the most natural way possible. Provide a very dignified, quality of care with the utmost grace. Think of it as "*DANCE OF MOVEMENT" between two human beings in awe of each others competencies and abilities.*

References

1. Falk, Judit M.D. Forty years of Lóczy, A Talk Given at Lóczy in 1986, on the Occasion of Its Fortieth Anniversary. Taken from Sensory Awareness Foundation Bulletin Winter "Emmi Pikler 1902 - 1984" 1994. no. 14. Issue

2. The steps of lifting 1-5 was a culmination of technical effort with discussion and application among Anna Tardos, Dr. Gabriella Püspöky, Dr. Marina Tóth and Márta Kozma during the week of July 8-12 1996.

Alexandra (f) born 96-01-23 96. 04.18. started at the Emmi Pikler National Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries.
photos were made 96. 07. 10.

Kozma, Márta - 1989. started employment at Emmi Pikler Institute. Present time lead educarer.

Püspöky, Gabriella MD. graduated from Budapest Medical University and was employed as a Pediatrician at Loczy in 1966. In 1991 became the Director of Emmi Pikler National Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries.

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If you are interested in obtaining more information or a complete list of publications including those in Hungarian write to: Emmi Pikler National Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries Lóczy Lajos u. 3, Budapest, Hungary, H-1022

* In the United States for more information write to Resources for Infant Educarers (RIE)1550 Murray Circle, Los Angeles. Magda Gerber, Founder Director, created the word "EDUCARER".

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